

# How do I write learning objectives?

## Module focus

- writing learning objectives
- learning objectives and learning activities
- learning objectives and assessment

## Module outcomes

- you will be able to write clear learning objectives
- you will be able to use learning objectives to prepare for classes
- you will be able to provide clear direction to students you teach
- you will be able to plan learning activities which support your learning objectives
- you will be able to conduct classes which assist students prepare for assessment

***'We as teachers often read and hear about how we need to include learning objectives in our curriculum and our teaching. But what are they? What are they designed to achieve? How do I actually write them? And how do I actually use them? I am not entirely sure about learning objectives.'***

### Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching? .....

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## Possible solutions

1. Write a sample learning objective for an upcoming topic you will be teaching. Such as:
  - At the completion of the class, my students should be able to ..... (one verb and one behaviour)
2. Ask yourself, 'Is my objective SMART (Specific + Measurable + Achievable + Realistic + Timely)?'
3. For one topic of a unit you are teaching, write a series of learning objectives beginning with the lowest level of the Cognitive Domains and work up through the hierarchy:
  - a. Knowledge
  - b. Comprehension
  - c. Application
  - d. Analysis
  - e. Synthesis
  - f. Evaluation

4. At the beginning of each lecture/tutorial, display that session's learning objectives (overhead transparency/PowerPoint).
5. At the end of each tutorial, re-visit the learning objectives by asking students to respond to a few questions based on the objectives.
6. Try asking students to summarise briefly what they learnt from the session and link responses to the learning objectives.
7. Have students write a response to one or two learning objectives at the end of class and ask them to leave in a box as they exit - a quick read will indicate level of achievement of objectives.

#### **Example:**

Students should be able to:

1. explain the six stage model of effective communication
2. identify the major elements of the elaboration likelihood theory
3. distinguish extrinsic from intrinsic motivation
4. apply the law of tort to a given case scenario
5. define public health nursing practice
6. construct a graph to plot the velocity of coronal mass ejection
7. analyse the role of Trotsky in the 1917 Russian revolution
8. discuss the duty of care required of architects

#### **More help**

Here are some resources from which you may seek some advice. They are all annotated so as to assist you in making judgements about what might be useful advice for your particular teaching context. By exploring some or all of these resources, you may well be able to generate strategies to suit your particular circumstances.

1. <http://www.calt.monash.edu.au/staff-teaching/support/objectives.html> - detailed discussion of writing learning objectives
2. <http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/gradatt/objectivesLearning.html> - a brief explanation of aligning learning objectives and content and learning activities and assessment, with links to lists of action verbs you can use when writing objectives
3. <http://www.wvrhep.org/ids/manual/WritingObjectives.htm> - helpful advice for those teaching in the health profession area
4. <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/reflection/table.html> - a table based on Bloom's taxonomy - useful for writing learning objectives for Law students
5. <http://adulted.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nwlink.com%2F%7E%2Fdonclark%2Fhrd%2Ftemplates%2Fobjectivetool.html> - a quick step by step guide for writing learning objectives
6. <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html> - Bloom's taxonomy of learning with an emphasis on asking assessment questions based on each cognitive domain
7. <http://www.businessballs.com/bloomstaxonomyoflearningdomains.htm> - looks at each of Bloom's domains of learning (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) and suggests behaviour descriptions, activities and action verbs for each of the six levels of learning
8. <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html> - includes a table which clearly defines each of the six levels of learning in Bloom's cognitive domain taxonomy, along with sample verbs and sample behaviours for writing learning objectives.

#### **Alert !**

Remember that learning objectives need to be measurable, so they need to specify an action which you want students to be able to demonstrate.